

UTU REJECTS MTA 'LAST, BEST AND FINAL'

- **MTA to Communicate Directly with Operators**

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Oct. 12) Despite a contract proposal that contained an "aggregate 10.3 percent increase in take home pay," the UTU leadership today rejected the MTA's "last, best and final" offer.

The announcement, by Board Chair Yvonne Burke and Mayor Richard Riordan was made at a 2:15 p.m. news conference at the Pasadena Hilton. News of the rejected contract package came, Riordan said, following a four-and-a-half-hour meeting with UTU General Chairman James Williams.



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At that meeting, Williams presented another counterproposal, but MTA officials told the media that the counteroffer was not enough for the agency either to maintain existing service or expand service.

Offer preserves some rules

Supervisor Burke said the final offer preserved "most of the union's scheduling work hour rules and guaranteed them preferred working hours. We firmly believe that employees will appreciate how this offer will make their lives better." She invited union leaders to ask their members to return to work.

Riordan said the MTA is "willing to get this dispute behind us. Our last, best and final offer is extremely fair." The proposal gives bus operators a 9.3 percent wage increase and a one percent reduction in their pension payments for an aggregate 10.3 percent higher take-home pay." The proposal also will save the MTA \$23 million over three years.

"We need, in return for this," Riordan said, "to change antiquated work rules – work rules that result in our bus operations costing 50 percent more than Long Beach, Santa Monica and San Gabriel bus operations."

MTA will go to the operators

CEO Julian Burke has told reporters that the MTA would communicate directly with UTU members if union leaders rejected the agency's final contract offer.

MTA spokesman Marc Littman told KCAL-TV news, Thursday, that the agency will mail information about the contract offer to UTU members' homes, set up a telephone tree and post information on the MTA web site.

"We think this is a really good offer and we're going to go directly to their homes in the hopes that they'll pressure their leadership to accept it and get those buses and trains rolling," Littman said.

Cardinal Mahoney's suggestion

According to City News Service, Cardinal Roger Mahoney cited the "enormous negative impact" of the transit strike, Thursday morning, in calling on the UTU and MTA to seek federal mediation. Mahoney suggested the parties invite Richard Barnes, director of the federal mediation service in Washington, D.C., to help work out a contract agreement.

Meanwhile, MTA and ATU negotiators had been scheduled to meet, Thursday, but as of early afternoon that meeting had not occurred.

During a rally in Burbank with mechanics and service attendants, Wednesday, ATU President Neil Silver asked union members to honor UTU picket lines. It was a change in Silver's position from the previous week when he ordered ATU members back to work, although few members actually have crossed the picket lines.

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